

The Dental Offices at Elizabeth Place – Steve A, Sato, DDS

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Silver & Bonded Resins

Silver Amalgams

Silver amalgam restorations are the traditional silver filling materials. They have been used with success by all dentists for more than 150 years. Silver amalgam fillings were originally meant to be a low-cost substitute filling material for those patients who could not afford the standard-of-care gold restorations. They can be used to replace small or large amounts of tooth structure lost through decay or fracture. They are not technique sensitive. They are composed of silver, tin, mercury, copper, and other metals. Some of the newer silver amalgam materials are mercury-free. We have no long-term studies on how well these mercury-free amalgams will serve.

The silver amalgams available have a life expectancy of 14 years with a plus/minus deviation of 14 years. They can last a long time or need to be replaced within a year of when they were originally completed. As with resin restorations, the smaller the filling, the longer it can last. This is still the restorative material of choice for many dentists but that number is declining. Most restorations for back teeth, regardless of size, are silver amalgam. With the advent of the newer bonded resin materials, many posterior (back) teeth that previously would have been restored with amalgam are now being restored with the more conservative and more naturally appearing tooth colored resin and porcelain materials. Silver amalgam fillings can now also be bonded when there is little remaining tooth. This, of course, will add to the total fee charged for the restoration.

Bonded Resin Restorations

Tooth-colored restorations have been used in dentistry for a long time. Several variations of these materials have been used in front teeth for many years. The newest generation of tooth-colored filling materials (resins) is also used to restore cavities in back teeth. This is especially true when the restoration would be easily visible when you talk or smile. The use of silver amalgam filling materials in small- to medium-sized restorations is declining. These posterior (back) tooth-colored resins can be expected to last for several years. A reasonable estimate at this time is approximately 10 to 12 or more years. Longevity of the resin fillings (and silver fillings) is a function of the position and size of the filling, the care the patient gives it, and the foods the patient eats.

Resin restorations in back teeth require less drilling than for silver fillings. Because of the filling material itself and the insulating liners and bases used under these

resins, there can be fluoride release and a subsequent inhibition of new cavity formation. They are excellent for small one-, two-, and three-surface restorations in premolars and molars. Advantages of the resin restorations include a natural appearance similar to that of your real tooth and the most conservative preparation of your tooth. The less the dentist must drill your tooth, the better off you are and the fewer dental problems you will develop in the future. They also restore a high percentage of the tooth's original strength. When a tooth is prepared (drilled), it becomes weaker. Restoring it with a bonded resin material will help make it strong again. They require only one appointment for completion.

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REPORT ANY UNUSUAL OCCURRENCES IMMEDIATELY!

If you have any questions regarding this information, call Dr. Sato for clarification.